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**Economic and Social History of Chowan County, North Carolina, 1880-1915, Columbia University, Studies in History, Economics and Public Law.** By W. Scott Boyce, Ph.D. New York: Columbia University Press, 1917. Pp. 293.

Mr. Boyce's monograph is most interesting. He answers every question which might be asked by the economist, sociologist or student of religion, about the people of a particular county in 1880 and again in 1915. He tells us about their methods of cultivating the soil, of planting different crops, of fishing, of stock-breeding; he describes the food they lived on, their houses, and their social and religious customs. But the most interesting feature of the book is his description of the changes which modern inventions have made in the life of the people. He studies in a most intensive way the contrast between their manner of living, their dwellings, their customs, social and religious, etc., in 1880 and in 1915. The monograph contains a specimen of the kind of history which modern sociologists have been demanding.

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**The Middle Group of American Historians.** By John Spencer Bassett, Ph.D., LL.D., author of "A Short History of the United States," "The Life of Andrew Jackson," etc. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917. Pp. xii+324.

American historical writing has been distinguished successively by three main characteristics. Prior to the Revolution the colonial spirit naturally predominated. In this period each historian was interested almost exclusively in the origin and growth of his own colony. The early record of Virginia, outside the brief narratives of the early settlers, has been left us by Robert Beverly and William Stith. In New England the most prominent writers of the period were Bradford, Winthrop, Price, and Hutchinson. Besides these may be mentioned Colden of New York, Samuel Smith of New Jersey, and John Lawson of North Carolina. The impulse to write history was felt more strongly in New England than in the other colonies. Here, more frequently than elsewhere, writers rose to tell the story of the past that posterity might not forget the struggles and hardships of earlier years.

The second or middle period of American historical endeavor was ruled chiefly by the patriotic impulse. It may be said to

begin with the end of the Revolution and to extend to a time not long subsequent to the Civil War, namely, to the time when the modern and scientific spirit secured dominance.

It is the middle period that receives treatment in the volume under review. The reader can hardly escape the impression that Dr. Bassett is an impartial critic. While not overlooking the merits of our chief historians of the middle group, he is nevertheless sensible of the defects in their writings; and his observations on this point confirm the views held for a long time that unreserved trust cannot be placed in historians like Bancroft, Prescott, Motley and Sparks.

Histories produced at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century were written in the after-glow of the Revolution. "We were all partisans of our own cause in the contest with Great Britain," says Dr. Bassett, "and, whether we wished to know its simple history or to read the biographies of its leaders, we demanded narratives that stimulated self-satisfaction." Writers of national and state histories and biographies "had more zeal than industry and were guilty of gross neglect of the sources of information" (p. 16). Weem's *Life of Washington* (1800) had a tremendous sale. Yet this and his subsequent biographies of Marion, Franklin and Penn "were full of inaccuracies. In fact, no writer of biography in America ever drew more freely on his imagination in composing his books. What he did not know he invented, if it seemed good to him. . . . His works are utterly worthless as books of fact, but he drew vivid pictures of what he thought Washington, Franklin and Marion ought to be" (p. 21). Of the writers of this period Jeremy Belknap and Ebenezer Hazard, by their industry and impartiality, approached nearest the modern ideal of history.

Abiel Homes, Benjamin Trumbull and Timothy Ritkin wrote histories of the United States (1805, 1810, 1828), all distinguished for some merit, yet so deficient in general worth that they are now held in slight esteem. It was with the idea of making up for the defects in their works that Bancroft was induced to begin his history. Washington Irving's historical volumes (published from 1809-1859) are void of the modern spirit, yet were composed "with enough accuracy to satisfy the

age in which he wrote" (p. 23). Charles Etienne Arthur Gayarré, author of a "History of Louisiana," though at times giving free range to his fancy, takes high rank among the historians of the middle period.

Outside the introduction of about fifty pages on the development of our history prior to the Civil War, Dr. Bassett's volume is devoted exclusively to the public and literary careers of Sparks, Bancroft, Prescott, Motley and Peter Force. These he considers the most eminent characters of the group concerned.

Jared Sparks' early bent was toward mathematics, natural history and theology. First a school teacher, then a minister, he gave up both professions, and became in 1823 editor of the *North American Review*. It was while thus occupied that the idea came to him of publishing an edition of the Writings of Washington. After considerable difficulty he secured in 1827 Washington's bulky correspondence preserved at Mt. Vernon and took it to Boston. With such a vast quantity of valuable historical material in his possession Sparks was dazzled by the opportunities opening before him; and before the "Washington" was completed in 1837 he had undertaken six other books. All these were brought out at various intervals before 1840. The most interesting part of Sparks' career are his visits to domestic and foreign archives in search of historical documents for the completion of his works. His *Life and Writings of George Washington* (12 volumes) appeared between 1834 and 1837, and is his best known work. It was for a long time our chief authority on the life of Washington. Yet it is full of defects. Sparks thought that a sacred halo surrounded the life of a great man. "Holding this view, and many men besides Sparks held it in 1830, he could not make up his mind to paint Washington with small faults. He altered Washington's language and became liable to a charge of perverting the truth. But for this failing Sparks could be called the father of the modern school of American History" (p. 100).

While Sparks was busy with his volumes on the Revolution, George Bancroft was engaged upon his *History of the United States from the Discovery of the American Continent*. Bancroft's career as professor at Harvard and later as school master at Northampton had not been entirely to his liking, and about

1831, he turned his attention to the more congenial task of writing history. The first volume of his great work appeared in 1834. The remaining nine volumes were published between this date and 1875. The last volume completed the story of the Revolution. Bancroft's *History* made a great impression. It at once placed him first among living historians of our country. Yet today, as Dr. Bassett observes, Bancroft's history is out of date, and a changing age treats it with disdain. His chief fault, in the estimation of our critic, is his lack of detachment—"strongly partisan by nature and deeply imbued with the love of American independence, he glorified the struggle of the revolutionary fathers, and saw no good in the position taken by king and parliament. He crystallized all the hero worship of the old Fourth of July school into a large work written in a style acceptable to the time" (pp. 183-84).

In William H. Prescott we have a good example of steadfast devotion to the task of writing history amid trying difficulties. He resolved that a defective eyesight should not deter him from literary work. His *Ferdinand and Isabella* was brought out in 1836; *The Conquest of Mexico* in 1843; and the *Conqueror of Peru* in 1847. Prescott wrote according to the uncritical ideals of his age. From the present day standpoint his books have many limitations. His object was to produce a spirited and dramatic narrative in which there was unity of thought and purpose moving to a climax (p. 217). He did not write history as we now understand it, and his works on the Spanish relations have been superseded by others more in accord with the modern spirit.

There is perhaps even less of modern spirit in John Lathrop Motley than in Prescott. The *Rise of the Dutch Republic* (1856) and the *History of United Netherlands* (1860-68) give evidence of deep research, but are full of coloring. Like Bancroft and others, Motley had not the true historian's sense of detachment. "He frankly took sides. He hated the absolute government of the Spanish monarchy, he disliked the dogmas of the Roman Church, and he could not abide the repressive spirit of the Roman hierarchy. His histories were Protestant through and through. He drew Philip the Second as black as he could, but no blacker than Protestants have drawn him. Through many decades Motley was a one-sided historian" (p. 229).

The last career that receives treatment in Dr. Bassett's interesting volume is that of Peter Force, the compiler. In 1833, Force and his partner Clark, both of whom were printers, secured from the government a contract by which for a stipulated amount they were to publish a documentary history of the United States. Only nine volumes, however, of what was intended to be a vast series known as the *American Archives* ever appeared. Difficulties arose over the government contract and the publication was suspended in 1857, much to Force's disappointment. Force can hardly be called a historian, but he was an indefatigable collector. In this way he was of great service to the historians of his day. Had he been able to carry through properly his original design he would have produced a documentary history of immense service to future historians of our country. His *American Archives*, says Dr. Bassett, is now nearly forgotten: "It is not even a model for the many collections that have been published since its day. Its arrangement is poor, being entirely mechanical" (p. 272). Force's vast and valuable collection of historical material passed in 1867 to the Library of Congress.

Not the least interesting chapter of Dr. Bassett's book is the last showing the arrangements of early historians with their publishers. The profession of historian is less profitable now than in the days of Sparks, Bancroft, Motley, Irving and Prescott. It is perhaps not too much to say that the transition from popular to scientific history has not yet been fully accomplished so far as the reading public is concerned. This may explain the fact that, despite the growth of our population and the emphasis now given to the teaching of history, present day historians do not command the same degree of respect from the public that our historians of the middle group commanded in their day.

Dr. Bassett has written a useful book, and we hope that health and length of years will enable him to realize his design mentioned in the preface of producing a larger work allotted to other historians within the middle period.